

Winter 2014

Volume 2, Issue 2



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Partner Teacher Newsletter

Sally Jewell Visits Minnesota Valley NWR

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Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge had a very special visitor in early November: Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell! Since she accepted her position, Sally Jewell has made it a priority to visit America's public lands big and small.

It is her motive to encourage the next generation to become involved with public lands, and one of the best ways is through environmental education.

During her live press conference at Minnesota Valley NWR, Secretary Jewell highlighted the importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Overall, a total of 2.4 billion dollars is generated from



refuges, including the 35,000 jobs they support.

There are 561 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest network of lands dedicated to wildlife conservation.

Secretary Jewell went on to say, "Every dollar spent on the National Wildlife Refuge System returns five dollars just in

economic activity, and that's not looking at what it returns to our children, what it returns to our ecosystems...not just what you see on the surface, but what lives with us in this country that makes it beautiful. And what

we're doing right here in the Minnesota Valley NWR is a great illustration of America the beautiful right in an urban area."

To see the video clip of Secretary Jewell's visit to the refuge and to hear more about the Youth Initiative, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxpu4gn7eAc>.

Winter Phenology:

12/5: Winter storm leaves 6 inches of snow on the ground

12/6: American Tree Sparrows have returned. 2 "sun dogs" around the sun

12/9: Minnesota River is frozen and completely snow-covered

1/3: Mice tracks seen running to burrows in the snow

1/6: -24°F breaks the record for the lowest temperature in the Twin Cities area

1/15: 3 inches of snow

1/16: Fresh beaver "chew" near the house and river

Winter Field Trip Reminders

During the winter field trip season, emotions run high. Every moment is an adventure for a student who may be experiencing the first snow of the season or putting on snowshoes for the first time.

When these things happen, it's easy to forget that even though they may be out of school for the day, they are still following "naturalist rules." Here are a few tips to keep your field trip focused on learning:

- Leave snow on the ground. Nothing takes away a good teaching moment like a snowball fight.
- Once students have on their snowshoes, remind them to sit patiently and quietly on their bench.
- Remind students with snowshoes on that while they are in the basement to walk only on the black mat. Also, while outside, only walk on snow. Walking on concrete ruins snowshoes.
- Snow is wonderful and just looking at it makes kids want to play in it, but there is a time and place for play.
- Remind students and parents to bring winter gear along for their field trip. Let us know as soon as possible if you need to borrow gloves or hats from our borrowing closet.

Revised “In a Nutshell” Workshop at YOUR School

What if you had access to your own personal naturalist to help you discover the nature right outside your classroom door, or at the nearby park or nature area?

Well you do, and it is **FREE!** Refuge staff can help design a 90-minute workshop just right for you and your teaching team.

Free lesson ideas, worksheets, and resource materials are included in each “In a Nutshell” workshop.

A minimum of 20 educators is needed to schedule a workshop. Dates and times are flexible. Refuge staff can provide topic suggestions if needed after previewing your site.

Priority is currently being given to requests from Partner Schools and registered Partner Teachers.

To plan a session at your school, call Suzanne at 952-361-4502.

Here are a few theme *suggestions*:

1-2-3 Tree ID

Birds in Your Backyard

Water Critters

Tracks, Trails and Other Wildlife Signs

Insect Investigations

*** (YOUR idea here) ***

Upcoming Workshops and Events—Earn CEU’s and Qualify for Renewal

Snowshoe Night Hike

Thursday, February 13 from 6:30-8:30pm @ the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center. Reservations required—sign up here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XVZTBJC>—2 CEU’s available.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 15 from 8:00-10:00am @ the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center. 2 CEU’s available.

Rookery Snowshoe Hike

Saturday, February 22 from 9:30-2:00pm @ the Wilkie Unit. Reservations required—call Mara at 952-858-0710. 4.5 CEU’s available.

Project WILD for Boy Scout Leaders

Saturday, April 5 from 9:00 - 4:00 @ the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center. To register, contact Jan Welsh @ jan.welsh@state.mn.us 7 CEU’s available.

Environmental Education Cohort—Sponsored by Jeffers Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

You are invited to join a dedicated group of elementary educators focused on integrating and embedding environmental education and outdoor instruction into everyday school instruction. Join us for one Saturday morning workshop or as many as you can! 3 CEU credits are available for each session.

Sessions are the first Saturday each month from 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. February—May at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center.

- **February 1: Quick and simple ways to integrate EE** (Receive the EcoTime Cards and CD)
- **March 1: The Nature of Math – Teach Math within the context of the Environment**
- **April 5: Reading and Writing with the Environment in Mind**
- **May 3: Tips and Tricks for Outdoor Instruction**

To reserve a spot go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EECohort2014> and indicate which dates you’ll join us. Consider it an opportunity to attend topic specific mini-workshops at no cost!!

Conservation Education in a Changing Climate!

Saturday, April 12 from 10:00-4:00 @ the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center. To register go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ClimateChange2014>—6 CEU’s available.

Nature Drawing and Journaling

Sat., Apr. 27, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. & Sun., Apr. 28, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. @ the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center. To register contact: Hamline University at 651-523-3000. 12 CEU’s available.

Growing Up Wild! (Pre-K through 2nd Grade Focus)

Wednesday, June 25, 10 am - 2 pm @ the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center. To register, contact Laura Bonneau @ laura_bonneau@fws.gov—4 CEU’s available.

For more detailed information about these workshops go to:
www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley

Help Us Fill the Refuge Borrowing Closet

so ALL students can comfortably and safely explore the refuge during winter field trips.

Donate new or gently used hats, mittens, coats, snow pants, and snow boots to:

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center (open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am –4:00 pm) or at your school office.

OR

Write a check to Refuge Friends, Inc., mark “borrowing closet” in the memo line and mail to:

Steven Sutter, President
Refuge Friends, Inc.
3815 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425



Read what one of our Partner Teachers has to say about the program!

“I have really enjoyed the training opportunities provided by the specialists at Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center. Their shared enthusiasm and expertise means they can share a wealth of information in a short amount of time. By the time my colleagues and I finished the training session we had everything we needed to teach the lessons with confidence. The science curriculum is multi-dimensional, hands-on and easy to adapt to any group of students and , with cut-backs and scarcity affecting the classroom, it is a pleasure for our students to be surrounded with a science-rich environment. Best of all, we’ve seen students who struggle in the classroom become leaders here. Our students love this program and so do we!”

Gaye Guyton, Gifted Services 1st Grade



Submit Your Photos and Funny Quotes to Us

The old saying goes, “A picture speaks a thousand words.” At the refuge, we try to use our pictures to do just that. However, we’re only telling half of the story when we don’t share the quotes that go along with the photos. This is where you come in.

Would you like to see some of your class’s field trip photos in the next edition of the Partner

Teacher newsletter? Now is your chance! We are always looking for great pictures to capture some of the best moments from our field trip season.

If you have some pictures or funny student quotes you would like to submit, please email them to Chelsi at chelsi_hornbaker@fws.gov.

Students Say the Funniest Things!

“Shhhh . . . We are observing!”
Kindergartner ,Vista View Elementary

“Yellow snow! It must be lemon flavored.” 3rd Grader, Vista View Elementary

“This is a seed paradise!” 2nd Grader, Lake Nokomis Community School

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
15865 Rapids Lake Road
Carver, MN 55315
(952) 361-4500

Bloomington Education and Visitor Center
3815 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425
(952) 854-5900

Visit our website to learn more about
your refuge [here](#).

Like us on Facebook [here](#).

Follow us on Twitter [here](#).

Check out our photos on Flickr [here](#).

The Blue Goose Bus Fund

Did you know that a fund has been established to help schools absorb the cost of busing their **Refuge Partner School** and **Refuge Partner Teacher** students to Minnesota Valley NWR for educational field trips? This fund was established and is managed by **Refuge Friends Inc.**, a 501 (C)3 non-profit.

To learn how you can be involved, please contact:

President Steven Sutter, Refuge Friends Inc.

3815 American Blvd. East

Bloomington, MN 55425

952-858-0737



*Did you know that we
have a new address?*

If you're a partner teacher at the Rapids Lake Unit, be sure to send your bus invoices directly to the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center at :

15865 Rapids Lake Road
Carver, MN 55315

Be a Nature Hero: Including Nature in Everyday Life

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe has signed an order authorizing urban partnerships. This means that refuges found near cities, much like Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, will be undergoing analysis to emphasize education in their urban areas.

Director Dan Ashe is hoping that this new Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative will "encourage all Service programs to conduct cooperative fish and wildlife conservation, education, and outreach in urban communities." As of September 25th, there are 8 pilot urban refuge partnerships in surrounding cities such as

Chicago, Houston, and Baltimore.

Much of the focus is aimed at refuges "within 25 miles of urban areas with 250,000 people or more, but also can benefit refuges serving rural communities."

To assist in this initiative, the first ever Urban Refuge Academy was held for USFWS employees and partners to help engage urban Americans in new, effective ways.

To learn more about our urban partnerships, please visit www.fws.gov/refuges/refugeupdate/NovDec_2013/urban_partnerships.html.



All of us at Minnesota Valley NWR hope that you had a wonderful holiday season. We are thankful for each and every one of you.
Thank you for all that you do!

Chelsi Hornbaker, Partner Teacher Coordinator